



NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Contact: Vernon Preston
(208) 232-9306

Matt Ocana
(801) 524-5692, ext. 226

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August

23, 2007

NWS PIH PR2007-12

NOAA'S NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE RECOGNIZES IDAHO'S SOUTHEASTERN DISTRICT HEALTH DEPARTMENT AS STORMREADY

Officials from NOAA's National Weather Service today praised Idaho's Southeastern District Health Department for completing a set of rigorous warning criteria necessary to earn the distinction of being StormReady®.

"StormReady encourages communities to take a new, proactive approach to improving local hazardous weather operations and public awareness," said Vernon Preston, warning coordination meteorologist at the National Weather Service office in Pocatello. "StormReady arms communities with improved communication and safety skills needed to save lives and property – before and during the event."

The nationwide community preparedness program uses a grassroots approach to help communities develop plans to handle local severe weather and flooding threats. The program is voluntary and provides communities with clear-cut advice from a partnership between local National Weather Service forecast offices and state and local emergency managers. StormReady started in 1999 with seven communities in the Tulsa, Okla., area. There are now more than 1,235 StormReady communities across the country. The Idaho Southeastern District Health Department became the first such entity in the nation to receive this recognition.

Rick Dittmann, meteorologist-in-charge of the National Weather Service office in Pocatello, today presented a recognition letter and a special StormReady sign to health department preparedness officials at the Southeastern District Health Department director's meeting. The StormReady recognition will be in effect for three years when the county will go through a renewal process.

"The StormReady program provides communities with clear-cut weather warning and preparedness advice through a partnership between the National Weather Service and emergency preparedness managers," said Rod Horejs, manager, Southeastern District Health Department Health Preparedness Program. "The program is a great approach to help communities develop systems and plans to handle local severe weather in any season. We are excited to be recognized for our readiness capabilities and proud to be associated with the National Weather Service as StormReady partners."

"Every year, around 500 Americans lose their lives to severe weather and floods," said Mary Glackin, acting director of NOAA's National Weather Service. "More than 10,000 severe thunderstorms, 5,000 floods and 1,000 tornadoes impact the United States annually, and hurricanes are a threat to the Gulf and East coasts. Potentially deadly weather can affect every person in the country. That's why NOAA's National Weather Service developed the StormReady program."

To be recognized as StormReady, a community must:

- Establish a 24-hour warning point and emergency operations center;

- Have more than one way to receive severe weather forecasts and warnings and to alert the public;
- Create a system that monitors local weather conditions;
- Promote the importance of public readiness through community seminars;
- Develop a formal hazardous weather plan, which includes training severe weather spotters and holding emergency exercises.

“The United States is the most severe weather prone region of the world. The mission of the National Weather Service is to reduce the loss of life and property from these storms and StormReady will help us create better prepared communities throughout the country,” Dittmann said.

“Just like communities, families need to be storm ready by having an action plan for severe weather. Through StormReady, the National Weather Service plans to educate every American about what to do when severe weather strikes because it is ultimately each individual’s responsibility to protect him or herself,” added Preston.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is celebrating 200 years of science and service to the nation. From the establishment of the Survey of the Coast in 1807 by Thomas Jefferson to the formation of the Weather Bureau and the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries in the 1870s, much of America’s scientific heritage is rooted in NOAA.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and information service delivery for transportation, and by providing environmental stewardship of our nation’s coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners, more than 60 countries and the European Commission to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects.

###

On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA’s National Weather Service: <http://www.weather.gov>

NOAA’s National Weather Service in Pocatello: <http://www.weather.gov/pocatello>

NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards: <http://www.weather.gov/nwr>

NOAA’s StormReady program: <http://www.stormready.noaa.gov>

StormReady® is a registered trademark of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Photo Caption

Idaho's Southeastern District Health Department Becomes StormReady

Left to Right

NWS Pocatello WCM: Vernon Preston

Southeastern District Health Department – Preparedness Staff:

Denise O'farrell, Rod Horejs, Penny Nelson, Mary Howell, Darin Letzring, Michelle Butterfield

